

# Was Anne Frank's Diary a Hoax?

**I**s propaganda which involves exaggeration and distortion of facts, however worthy the cause for which it is used, ever justified? Is fiction, labeled with the brand of authenticity, ever impossible?

No doubt Harriet Beecher Stowe, when she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, did so prompted by the highest of motives. Yet she, herself, relates the incident when she first met Abraham Lincoln in 1863, when he commented: "So you are the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!"

Few will deny that the printed word in this instance fanned the flames of passion which brought about one of the bloodiest and saddest wars of history, with brother sometimes pitted against brother, father against son. Perhaps if there had been less appeal to the emotions the problems might have resolved themselves through peaceful means. However, almost universally read at the time, few people then recognized the potency of one small book or the injustice done the South through its wide acceptance as a fair picture of slavery in the South.

Propaganda, as a weapon of psychological warfare is even in wider use today. Communists are masters of the art. Often they use the direct approach; just as often they employ diversion tactics to focus the eyes and ears of the world in directions other than where the real conflict is being waged. For many years, through propaganda alone, the *dead* threat of Hitler and Nazism has been constantly held before the public in a diversion maneuver to keep attention from being directed against the *live* threat of Stalin, Khrushchev and Communism.



By TERESSA HENDRY

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Such has been the effect, if not the deliberate intention of many who have promoted its distribution, of a book of dynamic appeal—*The Diary Of Anne Frank*. It has been sold to the public as the actual diary of a young Jewish girl who died in a Nazi concentration camp after two years of abuse and horror.

Most Americans have read the book or seen the movie version, deeply moved by the real life drama it claims to present. But have we been misled in the belief that Anne Frank actually wrote this diary? And if so, should an author be permitted to produce a work of fiction and sell it to the world as fact, particularly one of such tremendous emotional appeal?

#### Myths Die Hard

More than five years ago the Swedish journal *Fria Ord* published two articles commenting on *The Diary Of Anne Frank*. A condensation of these articles appeared in the April 15, 1959 issue of *Economic Council Letter*, as follows:

History has many examples of myths that live a longer and richer life than truth, and may become more effective than truth.

The Western World has for some years been made aware of a Jewish girl through the medium of what purports to be her personally written story, "Anne Frank's Diary." Any informed literary inspection of this book would have shown it to have been impossible as the work of a teenager.

A noteworthy decision of the New York Supreme Court confirms this point of view, in that the well known American Jewish writer, Meyer Levin, has been awarded \$50,000 to be paid him by the father of Anne Frank as an honorarium for Levin's work on the "Anne Frank Diary."

Mr. Frank, in Switzerland, has promised to pay to his race-kin, Meyer Levin, not less than \$50,000 because he had used the dialogue of

Author Levin just as it was and "implanted" it in the diary as being his daughter's intellectual work.

#### Lawyers Evasive

Inquiry of the County Clerk, New York County, as to the facts of the case referred to in the Swedish press, brought a reply on April 23, 1962, giving the name of a New York firm of lawyers as "attorneys for the respondent." Reference was to "The Dairy of Anne Frank 2203-58."

A letter to this firm brought a response on May 4, 1962 that "Although we represent Mr. Levin in other matters, we had nothing to do with the Anne Frank case."

On May 7, 1962, came the following reply from a member of a firm of New York lawyers to whom the original inquiry had been forwarded:

It was the attorney for Meyer Levin in his action against Otto Frank and others. It is true that a jury awarded Mr. Levin \$50,000, in damages, as indicated in your letter. That award was later set aside by the trial justice, Hon. Samuel C. Coleman, on the ground that the damages had not been proved in the manner required by law. The action was subsequently settled, while an appeal from Judge Coleman's decision was pending.

I am afraid that the case itself is not officially reported, so far as the trial itself, or even Judge Coleman's decision, is concerned. Certain procedural matters were reported, both in 141 New York Supplement, Second Series 170, and in 5 Second Series 181. The correct file number in the New York County Clerk's office is 2241-1956 and the file is probably a large and full one which must include Judge Coleman's decision. Unfortunately, our file is in storage and I cannot locate a copy of that decision as it appeared in the New York Law Journal early in the year 1960.

*The Diary Of Anne Frank* was first published in 1952 and immediately be-

came a bestseller. It has been republished in paperback, 40 printings. It is impossible to estimate how many people have been touched and aroused by the movie production.

Why has the trial involving the father of Anne Frank, bearing directly on the authenticity of this book, never been "officially reported"? In royalties alone, Otto Frank has profited richly from the sale of this book, purporting to depict the tragic life of his daughter. But is it fact, or is it fiction? Is it truth or is it propaganda? Or is it a combination of all of these? And to what degree does it wrongfully appeal to the emotions through a misrepresentation as to its origin?

Recently the *Idaho Daily Statesman* carried the following editorial:

#### **Remember Anne Frank**

A young Jewish girl whose diary stirred millions around the world, was remembered last week in a simple ceremony in Amsterdam marking the 20th anniversary of her arrest by the Nazis.

The story of Anne Frank still causes free-thinking people to meditate on the ways of the world, the insane manner of men hungry for power. Remember? From the time she was 12 until before her death at 14 in a Nazi concentration camp, Anne lived with her parents, a sister and four other Jewish persons in one room concealed in the back of a house in Amsterdam.

All but Anne's father perished in the concentration camp. Upon his liberation he returned to the Amsterdam house and found his daughter's famous diary. This youngster always had hopes for the future, but she was to be denied the right to live. She was a Jew.

Racial hatred is the worst sickness which mankind endures. It erodes a man's conscience, makes a mockery out of his religion. Fan the flames of hate and the youngest souls are scarred, and often tragedy results regardless of age.

Americans take exception to viol-

ence. This is a democracy of peoples. It is difficult to understand how supposedly liberty loving people can allow the treacherous disease of racial hatred to spread among thinking adults, among innocent children.

The Boise Public Library has a book which can tell the story better. We recommend **The Diary of Anne Frank**. Read it and think before you, too, may spew out a bit of racial hatred.

Similar comment appears from time to time. School publications for years have recommended this book for young people, presenting it as the work of Anne Frank. Advertising in advance of the movie showings has played up the "factual" nature of the drama being presented. Do not writers of such editorials and promoters of such advertising, "fan the flames of hate" they rightly profess to deplore?

Many American Jews were shocked at the handling of the Eichmann case, the distortions contained in the book *Exodus* and its movie counterpart, but their protests have had little publicity outside of their own organ, *Issues*, by the American Council for Judaism. Others who have expressed the same convictions have been charged with anti-Semitism. Yet it is to be noted that both Otto Frank and his accuser Meyer Levin, are Jewish, so a similar charge would hardly be applicable in pursuing this subject to an honest conclusion, in fairness to all.

File number 2241-1956 in the New York County Clerk's office should be opened to the public view and its content thoroughly publicized. Misrepresentation, exaggeration, and falsification has too often colored the judgment of good citizens. If Mr. Frank used the work of Meyer Levin to present to the world what we have been led to believe is the literary work of his daughter, wholly or in part, then the truth should be exposed.

To label fiction as fact is never justified nor should it be condoned.